

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
 INR-07 NSAE-00 /054 W
 045085 /53

P R 171420Z DEC 76
FM AMCONSUL ASMARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4278
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON
COMNAVTELCOM WASTGEE47 ,---/USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN
COMIDEASTFOR
NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA
NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI
CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 1066

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS ET
SUBJECT: MASSAWA CONVOY ATTACKED

1. THE FUEL AND GOODS CONVOY WHICH DEPARTED MASSAWA ON THE MORNING OF DEC. 16 WAS ATTACKED IN MID-MORNING BY A LARGE GROUP OF INSURGENTS ABOUT 30 KM. FROM MASSAWA IN THE VICINITY OF MAI ALTA. THE ENGAGEMENT LASTED MOST OF THE DAY AND WAS CONCLUDED ONLY WHEN EPMG RELIEF FORCES CAME FROM BOTH MASSAWA AND DONGOLLO. ACCORDING TO REPORTS FROM TRUCK DRIVERS WHO ARRIVED IN ASMARA WITH REMNANTS OF CONVOY DURING THE AFTERNOON OF DEC. 17, AT LEAST 11 VEHICLES WERE DESTROYED IN THE ATTACK. THESE 11 INCLUDED TWO ARMY TRUCKS, A NAVY TRUCK AND A BUS TRANSPORTING NAVY PERSONNEL WHICH WAS GUTTED, KILLING AND WOUNDING MOST OF THE PASSENGERS. NO FUEL TRUCKS WERE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN HIT IN THE ASSAULT.

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2. AIR ACTIVITY IN SUPPORT OF RESCUE FORCES WAS APPARENT DURING THE AFTERNOON OF DEC. 16 AND AGAIN ON THE MORNING OF DEC. 17. THE ESCORT FORCE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES (UP TO 70 KIA'S AND 80 WIA'S), AND TO HAVE DISINTEGRATED AS AN ORGANIZED FORCE. ONCE THE RESCUE FORCE HAD REACHED THE CONVOY AND DRIVEN OFF THE ATTACKERS, MOST VEHICLES WERE INSTRUCTED TO

REMAIN WHERE THEY WERE FOR THE NIGHT.

3. COMMENT: THIS ATTACK IS PARTICULARLY UNNERVING FOR THE AUTHORITIES AS THEY WERE UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT SINCE THEY HAD REOPENED THE ASMARA-MASSAWA ROAD IN LATE NOVEMBER, THAT THE INSURGENTS WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO ATTACK CONVOYS AND IMPOSE FURTHER HARDSHIPS ON THEIR FELLOW ERITREANS IN ASMARA. ONE CREDIBLE EXPLANATION AS TO WHY THIS CONVOY WAS ATTACKED WHILE OTHER EARLIER FUEL CONVOYS WERE ALLOWED THROUGH OVER THE LAST THREE WEEKS, IS THAT IT WAS BELIEVED THAT THIS CONVOY WAS TRANSPORTING MILITARY SUPPLIES FOR THE EPMG'S NACFA RELIEF FORCE WHICH REMAINS STALLED BETWEEN KEREN AND AFEKET.
SLUTZ

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NNN

Message Attributes

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